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Message Text

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72
ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 SIL-01 AGR-20 CIAE-00

COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SPC-03

STR-08 TRSE-00 CIEP-02 OMB-01 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01

DRC-01 /142 W
---------- 036966
R 211419Z JAN 74
FM AMCONSUL DURBAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1639
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: NGXA
TAGS: ELAB,SF
SUBJECT: AFRICAN TEXTILE WORKERS STRIKE

REF: A. DURBAN A-1; B. DURBAN A-3

1. NATAL TEXTILE INDUSTRY FACING POSSIBLE MASSIVE WALKOUT REMINISCENT LAST YEAR'S STRIKES FOLLOWING IMPLEMENTATION NEW LIGHT COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY MINIMUM WAGE DETERMINATION JANUARY 18. OVER 2000 TEXTILE WORKERS WENT ON STRIKE JANUARY 18 AND 21 AT FIVE TEXTILE PLANTS.

2. STRIKES IN PROTEST INSUFFICIENCY NEW WAGE DETERMINATION WHICH FIRST SUCH DETERMINATION APPLIED PREVIOUSLY UNREGULATED LIGHT COTTON INDUSTRY. DETERMINATION PRESCRIBES MINIMUM
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WEEKLY PAY OF R13 FOR MEN AND R10.40 FOR WOMEN. WHILE THIS

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REPRESENTS SUBSTANTIAL PERCENTAGE INCREASE FOR LOWEST PAID AFRICAN EMPLOYEES, MORE SENIOR AFRICAN WORKERS WHO ALREADY RECEIVE ABOVE MINIMUM GRANTED LITTLE OR NO INCREASE. THEY NOW DEMANDING R3 PAY HIKE.

3.STRIKES FOLLOW CANVASSING BY AFRICAN TEXTILE WORKERS UNION (ATWU) TO ORGANIZE TEXTILE WORKERS AT HAMMERSDALE AND NEW GERMANY PLANTS. UNION HAS TRIED REPRESENT WORKERS BUT HAS NOT BEEN RECOGNIZED BY TEXTILE MANAGEMENT WHICH CONTINUES REBUFF UNION ATTEMPTS NEGOTIATE STRIKE SETTLEMENT. ONE MILL, HOWEVER, HAS INDICATED WILLINGNESS GRANT SENIOR EMPLOYEES "SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE" IF THEY RETURN WORK IMMEDIATELY.

4. COMMENT: THIS FIRST STRIKE WHICH DIRECTLY INVOLVES NEW AFRICAN UNION. WHILE ATWU ROLE THEREIN PURPOSELY KEPT UNCLEAR IT APPARENTLY ENCOURAGED WORKERS ACTIVELY SEEK REDRESS THEIR WAGE GRIEVANCES. ATWU LEADERSHIP HAD EXPECTED BROADER WORK STOPPAGE WHICH MAY YET OCCUR UNLESS WORKERS WAGE DEMANDS SATISFIED. UNION HAS SET UP STRIKE DEFENSE FUND AND SEEKING PUBLIC AS WELL AS WORKER CONTRIBUTIONS THERETO.
HOLMES

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